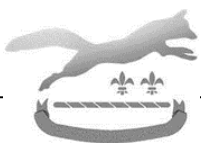


# Year 10 Knowledge Organiser

## Macbeth



### Context:

**King James I.** Previously known as King James VI of Scotland, he had recently ascended to the English throne – and Shakespeare sought to impress him by addressing his two big interests: kingship and witchcraft. King James was anxious about threats to his power from potential assassins and from witchcraft. The play also complimented the king's ancestry (Banquo, a noble character, was named after one of James' ancestors.).

**The Great Chain of Being.** In Jacobean times, people believed that all life was part of a strict hierarchy, with God at the top. Kings were thought to have been appointed by 'divine right' (selected by God) and therefore higher than the rest of mankind. Therefore, Macbeth not only tried to usurp Duncan (steal his position) but also committed blasphemy by challenging the will of God.

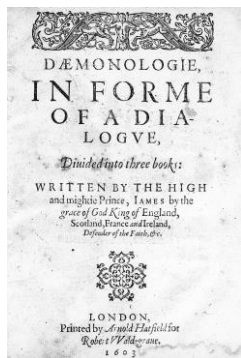
**The Gunpowder Plot.** In 1605, a group of rebels, including Guy Fawkes, attempted regicide by plotting to blow up Parliament. Shakespeare shows how those who attempt or commit regicide will be tormented by guilt and punished with a tragic death.

**The Supernatural.** There was real superstition and anxiety about the evils of witchcraft, in the lower classes and in royalty. King James had written a book called 'Demonology' which was a study of the evils of magic. He also asked Parliament to pass an anti-witchcraft law, which he then used to execute a number of witches in the North Berwick Witch Trials.

**The role of women.** Society was 'patriarchal' (led by men). Women were said to be lower than men in The Great Chain of Being. A woman's role in Jacobean times was clearly defined. They were expected to marry, to bear children and be subservient to men. Women who challenged this concept were sometimes labelled as witches and ostracised from society, or worse...

Double, double  
toil and trouble

Fire burn, and  
cauldron bubble!



**The Supernatural:** The supernatural interacts with characters in different ways: witchcraft directs Macbeth to evil deeds; Lady M appeals to the supernatural to instill power within her; Banquo refuses to submit to the witches' prophecies.

**Masculinity and femininity:** Lady Macbeth challenges expectations about what it means to be a woman (be submissive, bear children, lack ambition) and challenges the masculinity of males (Macbeth, when he doesn't want to commit regicide; Macduff when he flees to England).

**Fate versus Free Will:** It is unclear how much control Macbeth has over his own fate. The witches' prophecies may be self-fulfilling as Macbeth's own ambition takes over and he seeks to make the prophecies a reality.

**Loyalty and Trust versus Betrayal and Revenge:** Macbeth's loyalties are conflicted between his comradeship for Duncan and Banquo and his loyalty to his wife. He makes the fatal decision to trust the witches' prophecies, and so chooses to betray Duncan.

**Ambition:** Despite being a loyal and brave soldier at the beginning of the play, Macbeth can not resist the power of his ambition (his fatal flaw). Lady Macbeth's ambition also knows no bounds. Both characters are willing to disobey God to fulfil their ambitions. But consider where ambition leads these characters...

**Act One** The play opens with three witches who set the scene and atmosphere for the play. They cast prophecies on both Banquo and Macbeth saying that they will become King. Macbeth and Banquo have just returned from war between Scotland and England. Macbeth was successful in War, so King Duncan decides to stay at their castle when Macbeth returns. Macbeth wrote a letter to his wife about the prophecies and being King. Lady Macbeth creates a plan to murder the King so they will become King and Queen. Macbeth does not want to kill Duncan to begin with, but lady Macbeth manipulates him into doing so.

**Act Two** Macbeth begins to second guess himself about murdering Duncan but finally he goes through with the plan but freaks out after killing Duncan, so Lady Macbeth finishes the plan by wiping blood on the guards. The plan was to blame the murder on the guards so that Macbeth would not be a suspect in the murder. The next morning Malcolm and Donalbain, the king's sons, flee Scotland in order to stay alive. They believe they could be prime suspect in the investigation or someone could be targeting them next as they are heirs to the throne.

**Act Three** After Duncan's death, Banquo begins to think that Macbeth was the true murderer. In order to keep this a secret, Macbeth sends thugs out to murder Banquo and his son, Fleance but Fleance escapes. Macbeth holds a banquet for all the other lords at his castle. At this banquet, Macbeth sees the ghost Banquo. Macbeth begins to rant and rave, making the guest uneasy. Macbeth begins to show signs of mental illness, as if he was becoming insane.

**Act Four** Macbeth becomes obsessed with power and begins to ask the witches for more prophecies. The witches tell Macbeth that he should be fearful of Macduff, that he cannot be killed by man, and that he should only fear when the Dunsinane wood begin to move. Macduff begs Malcolm to defeat Macbeth. Soon after, Malcolm hatches a plan to kill Macbeth and become the rightful King of Scotland.

**Act Five** Lady Macbeth begins to go mad over her murders. Soon after her panic attack, she dies. Scottish lords begin to think that Macbeth is not the rightful King, so they begin to help Malcolm in his attempt to kill Macbeth. Macbeth is not overly worried as he believes the prophecy that no man can kill him, will protect him. The battle begins and Macbeth confronts Macduff and learns that Macbeth was ripped from his mother's side and not naturally born. Macduff then kills Macbeth in a final battle where he beheads him. Malcolm now becomes the rightful king of Scotland.

### Key Themes:



**Guilt:** Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are plagued by guilt after the regicide. As a result of this, the mental stability of both characters suffers a dramatic decline. Lady Macbeth grossly underestimates the power of guilt and is made to pay for this with her life. In the play the motif of blood represents guilt.

**Power:** The battle for power can be seen throughout the play. Arguably, some of the most powerful characters are female: Lady Macbeth and the Witches. Both forces are able to manipulate the play's protagonist: Macbeth. However, the power of God cannot be ignored. Are Macbeth and Lady Macbeth punished for committing regicide (a sin against God)?

**Chaos and Disorder:** At the beginning of the play, everything is in order. However, when Divine Right is challenged, with the murder of King James, the balance of The Great Chain of Being is offset. The play's events that succeed the regicide are marked by chaos and disorder, be it the mental state of the play's protagonists: Macbeth and Lady Macbeth; the state of Scotland or the weather / nature. Order is only restored at the very end of the play when the King is returned to its rightful owner: Malcolm (the eldest son of Duncan).



### Key Terms:

- ✓ Dramatic Irony
- ✓ Aside
- ✓ Soliloquy
- ✓ Poetry
- ✓ Prose
- ✓ Rhyming couplets
- ✓ Characterisation
- ✓ Hamartia
- ✓ Hubris

Look like the innocent  
*Flower*  
But be the  
*Serpent*  
under it.

### Characterisation

The character of **MACBETH** represents bravery, ambition, betrayal and guilt. The witches' prophecies transform him from a loyal warrior to a morally weakened and psychotic tyrant.

**Key words:** courageous, indecisive, submissive, disloyal, tyrannical, ambitious, remorseful, tormented, deluded, egocentric

The character of **LADY MACBETH** represents ambition, cunning, manipulation and guilt. She is a rebel, challenging the submissive role of women and the divine right of kings.

**Key words:** ambitious, commanding, conniving, heartless, malicious, manipulative, ruthless, sinister, guilty, paranoid

The character of **KING DUNCAN** symbolises nobility, dignity and trust. A compliment to royalty, he is respected and trusting – but then betrayed.

**Key words:** divine right of kings, the great chain of being, honourable, trusting

The character of **BANQUO** symbolises nobility, loyalty and trust. Through his loyalty and rejection of the prophecies, he is a foil to the character of Macbeth (a contrast).

**Key words:** brave, loyal, diplomatic, virtuous, friendly, astute

The **WITCHES** represent the supernatural, evil and equivocation. The witches' prophecies never give the full answer (they 'equivocate') and therefore tempt Macbeth towards his tragic end.

**Key words:** Trouble-making, prophetic, evil, eerie, manipulative

The **MACDUFFS** symbolise family, loyalty and vengeance. The Macduffs serve as a contrast to the Macbeths: they are loyal; they are a loving family; Macduff is the noble warrior when he kills Macbeth.

**Key words:** emotional, courageous, strong-willed, righteous, justice oriented, focused, deliberate, heroic, honourable, intuitive

# KS4 Independent Study Tasks

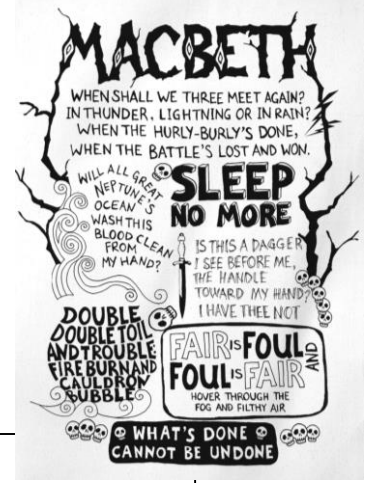
## Task 1: Narrative Arc

1. **Read** the act by act overview of the play on the other side of this Knowledge Organiser.
2. **Create** a visual timeline of the play to show what happens in each act.
3. **Add** 2-3 quotations from the Key quotes opposite to represent each act.

**Grade 7-9 enrichment:**  
Read the 'Themes' section on the opposite side of this page. Add information about how the themes are developed at different points in the play.

**Deadline:**

<b>AO1: What?</b> Details and evidence
<b>AO2: How?</b> Methods and effects
<b>AO3: Why?</b> Contexts and meanings



## Task 3: Characters

1. **Read** the 'Characterisation' section of the Knowledge Organiser.
2. **Create** a mindmap about each character. Include key attributes, personality, actions, emotions, relationships.
3. **Add** 2-3 quotations to represent each character.

**Grade 7-9 enrichment:**  
**Research** the characters in more detail. Look at how they have been presented and constructed in different versions and adaptations of the play. Make notes about the similarities and differences you notice in the different productions..

**Deadline:**

## Task 2: Context

1. **Read** the 'Context' section of the Knowledge Organiser.
2. **Research** the 5 key headings by conducting some deeper research.
3. **Create** notes on each of the 5 subheadings.

**Grade 7-9 enrichment:**  
Track the different female characters in this play and consider the idea of honour. Create a rank order of the female characters in terms of honour. You might put the witches at the bottom! Add details about your reasoning.

**Deadline:**



## Task 4: Key Terms

1. **Make** revision cards for each of the key terms on the opposite side of this Knowledge Organiser
2. **Define** the terms and **give** examples of how they are important in the play.

**Grade 7-9 enrichment:**  
Add more cards to your work – research and understand:

- Antithesis
- Paradox
- Catharsis
- Lexical field
- Anagnorisis

**Deadline:**



## Task 5: Memorising Quotations

1. **Use** the key quotes section on this page. Choose 2 quotations from each act that you think most reflect the developing action.
2. **Create** revision cards for each quotation.
3. **Write** the quotation on one side, using colours to make key words stand out.
4. On the other side **add** details about the action at the time, the methods used, the effect on the audience, the contextual relevance.
5. Look, say, cover, write, check! **Memorise** as many of the quotations as you can!

**Grade 7-9 enrichment:**  
**Add** thematic information to each revision card. How does Shakespeare develop themes through his language and structure? Why did he build his themes in that order?

**Deadline:**



## Task 6: Tracking Character Change

Characters change dramatically throughout the play. **Create** a timeline to show Macbeth at the beginning of the play, the key moments in his action, and how he changes at different points. Go from 'brave Macbeth' to 'dead butcher' representing his demise! **Add** on key words, images and quotations.

**Grade 7-9 enrichment:**  
Do the same for Lady Macbeth, or if you want, a different character e.g. Macduff.

**Deadline:**



## Key Quotes:

### Act 1

- "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (1.1) Witches
- "For brave Macbeth – well he deserves that name" (1.2) The Captain
- "Stars hide your fires, let not light see my black and deep desires" (1.4) Macbeth
- "Come you spirits...unsex me here and fill me from the crown to the toe top full of direst cruelty." (1.5) Lady Macbeth
- "Look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under't" (1.6) Lady Macbeth
- "When you durst do it, then you were a man" (1.7) Lady Macbeth

### Act 2

- "Is this a dagger I see before me, the handle towards my hand?"(2.1) Macbeth
- "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?" (2.2) Macbeth
- "A little water clears us of this deed" (2.2) Lady Macbeth
- "Wake Duncan with thy knocking, I would thou couldst." (2.2) Macbeth
- "Oh horror! Horror! Horror! Tongue nor heart cannot conceive, nor name thee" (2.3) Macduff
- "There's daggers in men's smiles" (2.3) Donaldbain

### Act 3

- "Thou has it all now, King, Cawdor, Glamis, all... and I fear though play'st most foully for't." (3.1) Banquo
- "To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo stick deep" (3.1) Macbeth
- "Of full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife" (3.2) Macbeth
- "Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck, till thou applaud the deed" (3.2) Macbeth
- " My lord is often thus, and hath been from his youth" (3.4) Lady Macbeth
- "I am in blood stepp'd so far, that, should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o'ver" (3.4) Macbeth

### Act 4

- "Something wicked this way comes" (4.1) Witches
- "Speak, I charge you" (4.1) Macbeth
- "From this moment, the very firstlings of my heart shall be the firstling of my hand" (4.1) Macbeth
- "The castle of Macduff I will surprise; seize upon Fife." (4.1) Macbeth
- "Macbeth is ripe for shaking, and the powers above put on their instrument" (4.3) Malcolm

### Act 5

- "Out, damned spot! Out, I say!... Will these hand ne'er be clean?" (5.1) Lady Macbeth
- "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (5.1) Lady Macbeth
- "Turn, hell-hound, turn...I have no words; my sword is my voice" (5.8) Macduff
- "I bear a charmed life which must not yield to one of woman born" (5.8) Macbeth
- "Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd" (5.8) Macduff
- "His fiend-like queen who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands took off her life" (5.9) Malcolm.